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ABSTRACT

A new approach to teacher preparation has been implemented at the University of Houston (Texas). The principal goals of preservice education in the Reflective Inquiry Teacher Education (RITE) Program are to produce teachers who: (1) are liberally educated; (2) have a scholarly command of a discipline; (3) teach effectively; (4) reflect on and inquire into teaching practice; and (5) can work effectively in cross-cultural settings. The RITE Progam is designed with high potential for training reflective, inquiry-oriented teachers. The curriculum is organized around focal problems stimulating to the complexities of teaching. Clinical training and field practice orients students toward an analytic approach to teaching, and students are taught to use a stimulated recall process technique to inquire into their teaching effectiveness. Students are taught by faculty specialized in the pedagogics to be mastered. Ongoing research is conducted into the characteristics of effective teachers, schools, and teacher training practices. (CB)

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UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

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REFLECTIVE INQUIRY TEACHER EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COLLEGE OF EDUCATION TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

by

B. Dell Felder

Several factors stimulated the desire for a new approach to teacher preparation at the University of Houston. New teacher education program requirements established by the State were to be implemented by Fall, 1985. A State program of competency testing for initial certification of teachers was to commence in 1986. The University of Houston faculty adopted a core curriculum which required adjustments to the teacher education program. The College faculty also approved new instructional goals for the teacher education program. Seeking to avoid response to these various mandated changes in piece-meal fashion, the Dean appointed a task force to provide direction for the redesign of the teacher education program. It was, as he put it, an "unusually opportune time for a fresh look at how the college prepares beginning teachers."

The Name of the Program

> Clark Kerr in The Uses of the University says a name means a great deal more than it sounds as though it might. The name of the institution stands for a certain standard of performance, a certain degree of respect, a certain historical legacy, a characteristic quality of spirit.

The task force took quite seriously the responsibility to recommend a name for the new program. Believing that the University of Houston College of Education teacher education program will become a symbol of quality in the profession, the task force wanted the name to reflect the program's essence.

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Beginning Assumptions

The principal goal of preservice teacher education in the RITE Program is to produce teachers who:

a. are liberally educated;

b. have a scholarly command of a discipline(s); i.e., understand the purpose, structure, and methodology as well as the information of a subject field(s);

c. teach effectively, integrating the affective and cognitive flow of experience in learning;

d. reflect on and inquire into teaching practice in ways which foster continuous professional growth;

e. can work effectively in cross-cultural settings with children of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

The intuitive feel for what is right and wrong in teaching is developed through reflection and inquiry. A teacher is the most competent person to examine his/her teaching and should develop the habit of regularly analyzing professional practice. Teacher educators should focus on helping students learn to use their own intellectual and emotional resources to inquire into the meaning and effect of their teaching.

The program is designed with high potential for training reflective, inquiry oriented teachers and includes the following characteristics:

a. the curriculum is organized around focal problems simulating the complexities of teaching;

b. clinical training and field practice orients students toward an analytic approach to teaching;

c. students are taught to use a stimulated process recall technique to inquire into their teaching effectiveness;

d. students are taught by faculty specialized in the pedagogics to be mastered;

e. ongoing research is conducted into the characteristics of effective teachers, schools, and teacher training practices.

The Curriculum

Teaching is a complex endeavor and one's knowledge of success can be very elusive. John Dewey said:

> Teaching can be compared to selling commodities. No one can sell unless someone buys. We should ridicule a merchant who said that he had sold a great many goods, although no one had bought any. But perhaps there are teachers who think they have done a good day's teaching irrespective of what pupils have learned.

Ways must be found to introduce teacher education students not only to the content of professional education but to the complexities involved in applying that content to practice. Studying theories of motivation or systems for designing instruction, in the absence of practical realities, often leaves beginning teachers with a poorly conceived understanding of the expectations of teachers. Misconceptions contribute to the difficulties beginning teachers frequently encounter early in their careers.

It is important that the teacher education curriculum be designed so that students:

1. work with complex problems associated with teaching;
2. come in contact with clients early and often during the training program;
3. deal progressively with their concerns about themselves as teachers, the task of teaching, and their impact on students.

IN THE RITE PROGRAM, THE CURRICULUM IS ORGANIZED AROUND FOCAL PROBLEMS OF TEACHING AND INVOLVES APPLICATION EXERCISES WHICH BRING TRAINEES INTO CONTACT WITH THE REALITIES OF TEACHING.

A focal problem can be defined as a problem simulation of a type frequently encountered by practicing teachers which offers trainees substantial opportunity to study and apply the content of professional education.

A series of focal problems provides the basis for designing training experiences. For example, in instructional design:

> The principal has requested your recommendation concerning the sequence of instructional objectives in your subject area.
>
> You are required to turn to detailed lesson plans for the first two weeks of school.

Or, in motivation:

> You are concerned because student morale does not seem very high in your classroom and student participation is lukewarm and lackadaisical.

Program objectives are subordinated to focal problems; that is, the experiences of trainees are organized around finding solutions to teaching problems rather than mastering objectives serially. Such an approach calls for interrelating objectives which focus on a problem area in teaching and for emphasizing application of theory to practice.

Studies have been conducted that identify problems most frequently encountered by beginning teachers. Program designers use such research as the basis for developing focal problems. For example, Veenman (1984) conducted a meta analysis of studies reporting perceived problems of beginning teachers and rank ordered the 24 most frequently reported as follows:

1. Classroom discipline
2. Motivating students
3. Dealing with individual differences
4.5 Assessing students' work
4.5 Relations with parents
6.5 Organization of classroom work
6.5 Insufficient materials and supplies
8. Dealing with problems of individual students
9. Heavy teaching load resulting in insufficient preparation time
10. Relations with colleagues
11. Planning of lessons and schooldays
12. Effective use of different teaching methods
13. Awareness of school policies and rules
14. Determining learning level of students
16. Knowledge of subject matter
16. Relations with principals/administrators
18. Inadequate school equipment
19. Dealing with slow learners
20. Dealing with students of different cultures and deprived backgrounds
21. Effective use of textbooks and curriculum guides
22. Lack of spare time
23. Inadequate guidance and support
24. Large class size

Once focal problems are identified, content presentations, readings, application exercises, and observation and practice experiences are designed in relation to the problem focus. A team of teacher educators designs and delivers the instruction.

For example, a team might develop a focal problem involving classroom management and motivation. Faculty specializing in these pedagogical fields would assume responsibility for preparing lectures or other forms of content presentation. Other members of the team, for example, section group instructors, clinical professors, field site clinical supervisors, and graduate interns, would work with faculty to design reading assignments, application exercises, personal inquiry processes, and clinical and field work.

All members of the team share responsibility for delivering instruction. A faculty member might deliver a lecture to the entire student group. Following that, section group instructors might work with students on application exercises. Clinical professors and field site clinical supervisors might coordinate and supervise observation and practice

in school settings. Graduate interns might facilitate students' examination of their experiences through stimulated recall process techniques.

Since focal problems usually involve a teacher's interaction with students, colleagues, administrators, and/or parents, this approach to curriculum organization increases the likelihood that trainees are placed in frequent contact with students and professional associates throughout their preparation program.

Clinical Training and Field Practice

Berliner (1984, p. 16) has suggested that the preparation of a teacher should involve:

> live students to whom to teach concepts where expert teachers can provide critiques of the lessons, and where the peers of the novice teachers and the children themselves can join in the analysis of the teaching activities that have just occurred.

The goal of practice in teaching is to enable prospective teachers to develop the ability to manage the diverse and complex tasks of teaching and to gain a sense of control over this process. Careful design and component supervision of experiences which involve working with elementary and secondary students in clinical and field settings is essential for the adequate preparation of a competent teacher.

Investigations, which have examined the impact of field experiences on prospective teachers, suggest that the typical student teaching experience does little more than socialize individuals into public school settings (Zeichner, 1984). A teacher needs to learn to make complex decisions to facilitate children's achievement. Most student teaching experiences do not provide neophytes sufficient opportunity to be creative and divergent without fear of failure or of hurting children. Too often, there is little opportunity or encouragement to reflect on and analyze practice.

The University of Houston Teacher Center currently includes 22 area school districts that cooperate with the College to provide observation and field practice for teacher education students. Because the number of students in the program is small compared with the large number of teachers employed in Teacher Center schools, only a few students, along with their clinical supervisors, are likely to be assigned to a given school at any one time.

The practice of placing students in many different schools mitigates consistency between campus and field regarding teacher education program philosophy and content. It lessens the possibility that students will experience training consonance. Furthermore, it makes it more difficult for College faculty and school personnel to form a stable working partnership to accomplish their mutual goals of preparing new teachers, providing ongoing professional development for teachers inservice, and applying the findings of research to the improvement of teaching practice.

IN THE RITE PROGRAM, SPECIAL TEACHER EDUCATION SITES WHERE THE TRAINING OF PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE TEACHERS IS A PRIMARY AIM ARE OPERATED BY LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION.

A Teacher Education Site (TES) provides:

1. clinical practice and field experiences for teacher trainees consistent with the philosophy and content of the campus teacher education program;
2. opportunity for students to work with a host of competent practitioners, in contrast to the one mentor only system;
3. staff development opportunities for school district personnel developed collaboratively by the College of Education and the LEA;
4. opportunity for LEA and College personnel to conduct research and develop ways to apply research findings to improve teacher education, teaching, and schools.

Teacher education students are placed in a limited number of Teacher Education Sites operated by local school districts where they work with specially designated mentors for observation, clinical practice, and field experience. The permanent or core teaching staff members of a TES are designated as Field Site Clinical Supervisors and have the status of adjunct faculty in the College of Education.

As a group, Teacher Education Sites provide a variety of educational settings ranging from schools serving middle class communities to those serving inner city ghetto areas. Students have experiences in several sites during their teacher training, thus extending their familiarity, understanding, and competence to deal with the varied contexts in which schooling takes place.

Students are concentrated in a TES. For example, five science student teachers, four in mathematics, six in social studies, plus 20 or 30 pre-student teaching students, placed in the school for short clinical practices or for observation, might be working in a TES during a given semester.

Concentration of students at the TES makes it feasible for College faculty to offer on-site seminars and short workshops. These can be attended by inservice teachers as well as preservice students and are developed to meet the professional needs of both.

Stimulated Process Recall Technique

Strong teachers manage whatever techniques they use with great skill and they utilize these skills in appropriate contexts. This "feel" for the right thing at the right time is what distinguishes them. They couple their skills with the intangibles of artistry, or as Rubin (1985, p. 4) puts it, "Their effectiveness . . . is as attributable to 'people smarts' as to 'book smarts' and they achieve impressive results through an amalgam of skills which almost literally 'make the student learn.'"

This intuitive sense for what is right and what is wrong is developed through reflection and inquiry into the meaning and effect of one's own and other's teaching.

The stimulated recall process can be a powerful tool for helping students develop skills necessary for meaningful inquiry into teaching practice.

IN THE RITE PROGRAM, THE STIMULATED RECALL PROCESS TECHNIQUE IS IN THE PROGRAM TO FACILITATE STUDENTS' REFLECTION ON AND INQUIRY INTO THE EFFECT OF THEIR TEACHING PRACTICE.

Described briefly, the stimulated recall process is a method for influencing human interaction. A videotape or an audiotape is reviewed by an individual to recall thoughts, feelings, goals, aspirations, bodily sensations, and other covert processes in the situation recorded. The individual describes these as explicitly as possible during the tape review.

The process helps teachers to improve their interpersonal relations by identifying effective and less effective behaviors and basic recurring personal characteristics and fears. The process initially involves assessing the affective sensitivities of trainees and providing them with feedback concerning their attitudes and dispositions. Trainees are then cycled through a series of experiences which involve conceptual input followed by opportunity to practice the concept first in simulated and then in real settings and, with the help of a preceptor, to inquire into the effects of their teaching.

For example, an instructor might present information concerning the skills of asking open-ended questions. Video would be used to provide opportunity for students to respond to situations involving use of the concept just taught. Students would work in small groups with preceptors who might be second-year trainees or graduate students. This phase of the process provides students with the theory to support practice.

Knowledge of effective teaching practices is necessary but insufficient. Trainees must overcome their fears of teaching. The second stage of the process involves helping trainees gain confidence to practice. Using video, preceptors help students debrief their reactions to stressful situations. Clinical devices which allow students to monitor their bodily reactions (heart rate, skin conductants, etc.) are also used. This phase of the process provides students opportunity to practice in a situation which

offers them maximum emotional security and poses no risk to clients (students, parents, professional colleagues).

In the next phase, trainees would be involved in high fidelity simulations where role play might be used, for example, to simulate the trainee's clients in practice-oriented problem situations. This experience is followed by another recall and debriefing session facilitated by the student's preceptor.

In the final phase, the trainee works with real clients on campus or in school settings. Following a teaching session, a second party might assist the trainee and his/her students separately to recall and debrief their feelings and thoughts about the experience. Subsequently, a process of mutual recall and debriefing involving both the trainee and his/her students would be employed.

Through this process, trainees learn to analyze their teaching behaviors, their interpersonal relationships, their emotional reactions to situations, and to learn about their impact on children directly from the children themselves.

In this way, teacher education students are taught to reflect regularly on their practice, inquire into its effect, and thus hone their skills into that "feel" for doing the right thing at the right time.

The Research Component

The operation of a teacher education program by a research oriented university should provide rich opportunity for research into teaching, schools, and teacher education. Nowhere are as many subjects suitable for research in education better aggregated. The opportunities are virtually unlimited.

Considerable work is needed to understand the factors which contribute to effective teaching and the operation of effective schools. Such knowledge undergirds training programs for teachers. In addition, much more needs to be understood about both preservice and inservice teacher preparation. The Task Force believes it essential

that a strong research component be developed alongside operation of the preservice teacher preparation program.

IN THE RITE PROGRAM, A RESEARCH COMPONENT IS DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE OPERATION OF THE PRESERVICE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM.

Agreements reached with school districts concerning the operation of Teacher Education Sites contain provisions regarding access to students and teachers for research purposes. Collaborative research projects are conducted by College faculty, graduate students, and school personnel. Faculty, whose graduate students teach in the program, involve these students in research teams working on problems which can be investigated through the program.

The Teacher Education Faculty

In research-oriented universities, a premium is placed on the depth of a faculty member's knowledge. Research tends to focus on relatively narrow areas of specialization. As faculty develop extensive expertise in an area, they naturally prefer to concentrate their teaching in that same area. Indeed, this is the source of the power that generally characterizes the graduate instruction in such institutions.

This situation is conducive to strengthening an institution's graduate instruction and research and can result in high quality teacher preparation programs. To begin practice, a beginning teacher needs sufficient knowledge in many areas of the professional curriculum. Due to the limited preparation time for prospective teachers, "sufficient knowledge" is often defined in the pre-professional curriculum by the "enough to get by and do no harm to children" principle. With too little time to teach all that should be mastered, it becomes essential that the most important pedagogical content be selected for inclusion in the curriculum.

Faculty with great expertise in a pedagogic area can usually select the most robust content from that specialty. Because of their great command and depth in the subject, these faculty are usually exceptionally effective teachers of that content.

Because they do not want responsibility for teaching a course that surveys many areas of pedagogy, many research faculty prefer not to teach in a pre-service teacher preparation program. It is not unusual, therefore, to find instructional responsibilities falling primarily to graduate teaching fellows.

This situation, of course, is not all bad. Graduate students in education gain important experience as undergraduate course instructors. Furthermore, they are often recent classroom teachers or school administrators and thus bring the practitioner's perspective into the training program.

But graduate students are transient. There is often little staff carry over from one year to another. This complicates efforts to assure the consistency of the curriculum or the systematic improvement of the program. High quality in program operation becomes more difficult to achieve.

IN THE RITE PROGRAM, A DIFFERENTIATED STAFFING (TEAM TEACHING) MODEL IS EMPLOYED TO STAFF THE PROGRAM.

Staff Roles

Teams are established for each phase of the program. Staff roles are performed by faculty, graduate students, adjunct faculty (from the public schools or other educational institutions), and by teachers and administrators in field sites.

Staff roles are described as follows:

Phase coordinator: responsible for coordinating and managing the instructional program for a given phase; tasks could include scheduling instructional events, facilitating the work of instructional teams, serving as liaison with field sites, articulating with other program phases, program evaluation and development, administering policies, etc.

Adjunct clinical professor: temporary adjunct faculty on leave from the public schools assigned to work with an instructional team; tasks could include program development, instruction, direction of clinical experience, etc.

Pedagogic specialist: specialist in a pedagogic field responsible for the objective(s) of that field in the program.

Team leader: responsible for coordinating activities for a phase group of elementary, secondary, or all-level students.

Section group instructor: responsible for conducting seminars, clinical experiences, and stimulated process recall experiences for a small group (section) of students.

Student teacher supervisor: responsible for supervising student teachers.

Field site clinical supervisor: public school teacher or administrator; member of the core faculty of a Teacher Education Site; responsible for providing instruction and serving as supervisor/mentor for students engaged in field work; would hold adjunct faculty status in the College.

Intern: graduate student serving a supervised internship in the program.

Staffing Pattern

A possible staff organizational pattern could be depicted as follows:

Phase Coordinator

Pedagogic Specialists
Adjunct Clinical Professor
Student Teacher Supervisors
Field Site Clinical Supervisors

Elementary Team Leader		Secondary Team Leader		All-Level Team Leader	
SGIs	Is	SGIs	Is	SGIs	Is

SGI - section group instructor
I - supervised intern

Instructional Delivery

A variety of instructional groupings are used. Lectures are delivered to large groups of students. Section groups of 20 students meet for seminars or discussions. Students work in dyads, or individually. They venture into various parts of the community and into many schools where they observe and practice teaching.

Several faculty members from a department might be involved in designing curriculum and delivering instruction. A faculty member might spend as few as four or five or as many as 20 to 25 hours during a semester in such an assignment. Their workload and specific instructional responsibilities are assigned and coordinated by their department. Other members of the instructional team work with these faculty to conduct seminars, execute application exercises, facilitate student inquiry processes, and supervise clinical or field experiences. In many cases, these team members are graduate students in the department.

Staff Training

While faculty can serve as section group instructors and/or student teaching supervisors, this role falls more often to graduate teaching fellows. Such students need training for work in the program. Prior to assignment as a section group instructor, graduate students are required to (1) complete 4 semester hours in clinical supervision and the interpersonal process recall technique, and (2) serve a one-semester internship in the program under the supervision of a faculty member in their department, a team leader, and phase coordinator.

Field site clinical professors and student tutors are provideh training as appropriate. Field based graduate courses are used as one means of training field site clinical professors, thus providing them with opportunities to earn graduate credit and/or credit toward career ladder advancement.

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